

Holy Cross Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

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Rev. Jim Berggren

August 23, 2026

13th Sunday after Pentecost

WORSHIP SERVICE

PRELUDE

WELCOME / ANNOUNCEMENTS

GATHERING SONG *Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation*

ELW 645

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

C: *Amen.*

P: God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: *Amen.*

P: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God,

C: *We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.*

P: God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthens you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

C: *Amen.*

PASTORAL GREETING
THE KYRIE

CANTICLE OF PRAISE *This is the Feast*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also, with you.**

P: Let us pray, together.

C: **O God, with all your faithful followers of every age, we praise you, the rock of our life. Be our strong foundation and form us in the body of your Son, that we may gladly minister to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

August 23, 2026 – Pentecost 13A

FIRST READING: Isaiah 51:1-6

Everlasting Salvation for Zion

51 “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; ² look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him, he was only one man, and I blessed him and made him many. ³ The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.

⁴ “Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: Instruction will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations. ⁵ My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm. ⁶ Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail.

The word of the Lord.

*Congregation response following the reading is: **Thanks be to God!***

THE PSALM Psalm 138

SECOND READING: Romans 12:1-8

A Living Sacrifice

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Humble Service in the Body of Christ

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

The word of the Lord.

*Congregation response following the reading is: **Thanks be to God!***

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

ELW Pg. 151

*Alleluia.
Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.
Alleluia.*

THE HOLY GOSPEL: Matthew 16:13-20

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷ Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Congregational response: Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN’S SERMON

PR. JIM’S SERMON:



PENTECOST 13A

8-23-26 Mt 16.13-20

WHO IS HE?

In this pre-election time of partisan, self-serving polling, where the answers reflect the hopes of the pollsters, but not necessarily the truths, of political reality, Jesus takes a poll. Speaking to his disciples, he inquires, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” A variety of speculative opinions are put forward, all of them positing reincarnations of former faith heroes, mostly prophets. Additionally, high on the wish list of all right-thinking people, is the rise to political dominance and worldwide rule, of the candidate favored by the majority. The common, “Son of Man” phrase, asks the theoretical question, “Who do people generally identify as the best that humanity has to offer?”

Jesus accepts these polling results. After all, they are just opinions! His next statement is, “That is what THEY say. Now what do YOU say?” Simon Peter ingeniously reframes the entire discussion with his answer, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.” Brash and impetuous, Simon Peter swings at a lot of pitches, but his answer to Jesus, his confession of faith is a brilliant homerun!! He redirects the question from “What does humanity have to offer?” to the identification of Jesus as the Anointed Son, the Best that Living **God** has to offer!” Amazing. What indeed does humanity have to offer that even compares minimally to what God has to offer?

Langdon Gilkey, former professor of theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School, taught English in China in the early 1940s. In 1943, he, and many other non-Chinese non-combatants in WW II, were detained by the Japanese and placed into internment camps in central China. Their life-styles changed in a moment from the privileged and prosperous to prisoners in poverty. The Shantung Compound was not a death camp, but it most certainly was not Lutherhill! Food was scarce. The camp was horribly crowded. A family of four would be allotted a living space of 9 X 12 feet.

Reflecting on two years of struggle and deprivation, Gilkey wrote: “The only hope in the human situation is that the ‘religiousness’ of men find its true center in God, and not in the many

idols that appear in the course of our experience.... This center of loyalty beyond themselves cannot be a human creation, greater than the individual, but still finite, such as the family, the nation, tradition, race, or the church. Only the God who created all men and so represents none of them exclusively; only the God who rules all history and so is the instrument of no particular historical movement; only the God who judges His faithful as well as their enemies, and loves and cares for all, only that God can be the creative center of human existence.”

In the detainment compound, the ultimate concerns of the prisoners were very often, not God at all, but self. What must I do to get food for myself and family? How can I get more living space for minimal comfort? Who do I have to bribe or con to get more food or living space, thus depriving someone else of those things?

Professor Gilkey would point out that everyone has a god. Even atheists. Our gods are the things that concern us the most. Our ultimate concerns are our gods. Here’s praying that our ultimate concern is always, Jesus, the Messiah, Son of the Living God. Simon Peter hit the nail on the head!

This incredible dialogue between Jesus and the disciples, takes place in Caesarea Philippi, basically a Roman, Rest and Recreation City, an R. and R., retirement enclave for Gentile citizens. In the old days, Caesarea Philippi was a main venue for Baal worship, and then it became a worship center for the god Pan. It was a place of entertaining PANdemonium, (many demons) as long as you didn’t PANic. Caesarea Philippi, was a city caught in the thralls of various BAD descriptions God. Bad descriptions of God cause people to perform outrageous rituals such as infant sacrifice, temple prostitution, and the slaughter of unbelievers, practices still carried on the world today. Bad ideas of God produce corresponding behavior!

Augustus Caesar gave this city, named Caesarea to King Herod. When Herod died, it passed to his son, Philip, who added his name to honor himself, along with Caesar. The audacity!!! It was not an accident that Jesus came there, a center of pagan culture and a centerpiece of the domination of empire. We know there is some kind of insurgency in progress. And this is not at all a neutral location for anyone to say anything like, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” That is trash-talk treason. The consequence for getting caught saying it, is the death penalty. This dialogue takes place in the enemy camp. Anyone overhearing this conversation could be a spy of Caesar, a local informant, paid to spy, or a Roman mole undercover in the group of believers following Jesus.

Why? Because Caesar is the Official son of god, not anyone else from Galilee. Caesar commands life and death. Thumbs up or thumbs down! Don’t even think about defying him. And yet there still seemed to be a consensus that Jesus was the King of something very important. Jesus tells Pilate that his Kingdom is not of this world. So, Pilate avoided conflict with Rome with his politically safe title for Jesus, “The King of the Jews.” If that’s not true, it is funny. If it is true, who cares? Caesar would view that title as a clever ethnic joke. It couldn’t backfire on Pilate or his reputation.

The dialogue continues. Simon has said, “You are Christ, Son of the Living God. Jesus comes back with, “You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church!”

There is an inside joke here. You know Peter had recently taken a lot of ribbing from his fishing buddies. It was one of those “Hold my beer” moments, when he jumped out of the boat into high seas. “Hey. If he lives, we’ll laugh about it later.” Who gets out of a boat in a raging storm? “Hey Simon, you dropped like an anchor, for sure. Can you teach me how to sink? Do you give sinking lessons? Was that the Rock Back-Float or the Skipping Stone-Stroke you did out there? It looked like the Pebble Paddle to me! Or perhaps the Boulder Butterfly.” “We’re not taking you for Granite because that’s not Gneiss.” After all of that teasing, Simon probably could have used a little encouragement.

Jesus lifted up Simon Bar-Jona, out of the drowning chaos. Now he lifts him up in status. He is no longer a faithless sinker. He has landed on the Ground of Being and is now a stable foundation for the future of the Movement. Simon names Jesus, as “The Son of the Living God.” Jesus in turn blesses Simon, by renaming him, Peter the Rock, the foundation upon which the Jesus movement will be built.

Peter has discovered in Jesus the nature of God the Father. God is loving and compassionate, serene in what is normally experienced as adversity, and always doing the work of redemption. God the Father, is not a killer, but instead a life-giver. Other sons of gods, the forgotten emperors of the ages, reflect quite the opposite images.

If you ask a rabbi, “What is God like?” he will rightfully direct you to the Torah and its great wisdom. If you ask an Imam, “What is God like?” he will urge you to study the Qu’ran. A Christian will tell you to simply live with Jesus and his friends. The word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have the living experience of the Son of the Living God, gustatory taste, olfactory smells, tactile touch, audio hearing and visual sight. He didn’t hurt or kill anyone no matter how justified it might have been. Does it matter who Jesus is? Only if it matters what God is like! Jesus is the standard by which we live our lives, the launching pad for creation.

It is not a well-known fact, but for most of the 20th century, Kansas was the most important state in the United States. How could that be? Look at Alaska and all of its resources: Oil, timber, minerals, fishing. Look at Hollywood Media and Wall Street Money. Look at Texas and its NASA dominance in space. All of those gifted and productive enterprises depended on a small disc on the Meades Ranch, in central Kansas, at the spot where the 39th parallel crosses the 98th meridian. Until 1986, the National Oceanic Survey used that geographical point as the reference for the exact positions of every location in the United States, and the world. Airplanes, ships and satellites came under this survey. Dams were built and missiles launched based on this reference point. Bridges built from both sides over long expanses of water met perfectly in the middle. It was the standard for that technological age. Now these calculations are triangulated from satellites to the Earth’s center of mass. We used to be accurate to the centimeter. Now we are accurate to the millimicron. To function, there has to be a reference point.

Jesus, accurately named by Peter as the Son of the Living God, is the standard by which we live our lives. Maybe that is why there is so much chaos in our society today. Everyone is using their own reference point. As it is repeated in Judges 17:6, “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.” No conscience. No moral compass. Just *Lord of the Flies*, animal anarchy. All of the utopian fantasies and movements in

the world with their urge to purge, have done an amazingly efficient job of assaulting and killing to achieve their ignorant, anti-historical ends. One hundred million people died in the 20th century, at the service of just one utopian vision, filtered through four major cultures. In contrast, Jesus didn't hurt or kill anyone. 'Ism' is the most dangerous suffix in the world, if it is not filtered through the life of Christ, the Son of the Living God, who never hurt or killed anyone, and instead gave his life for everyone.

John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*. His heroic protagonist was a man named "Christian." Christian was travelling to the Celestial City with a crushing, exhausting load strapped to his back. It was the weight of his own sin. Arriving at the foot of the cross of Jesus, as Bunyan put it, "his burden tossed from off his shoulders.....and began to tumble.....until it came to the mouth of the tomb, where it fell in and was seen no more." That grace is beyond human comprehension even as it defines our God.

Bad definitions of God, bad descriptions of God, bad expectations of God, promote bad behavior. Everyone has a God. Their God is their ultimate concern in their life.

In 1989, President George H.W. Bush (41) was entering St. John Episcopal Church, in Washington DC. He was approached by a homeless man named William Wallace Brown, Jr., who asked the President to pray for him. The President said, "No. You come inside with me and we will pray for each other." This was reported in the Washington Post, in November of 2000.

Raggedy and uniquely fragrant, Mr. Brown sat in the pews with the rich and powerful. He became a regular worshipper, and every Sunday, he put a dollar in the offering plate. One of the ushers wryly noted that many of the rich politicians also gave a dollar every week.

Mr. Brown understood how it works in the church of Jesus, built on the foundation of Peter the rock. The question comes to us through the centuries: "But who do you say that I am? What is your Ultimate Concern?" The future of humanity, all of heaven and earth depend on how each of us answer that question. Who is He? Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

Built on a Rock

ELW 652

APOSTLES' CREED

P: God has made us His people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith:

**C: I believe in God the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,**



was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
He ascended into heaven,
He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

THE LORD'S PEACE (*Please share the Peace with a neighbor*)

THE OFFERING

THE OFFERTORY RESPONSE *Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful* ELW Hymn 142

THE OFFERING PRAYER

All pray together:

Loving God, we offer at your table the gifts of our hearts. Help us take heart in you and share freely of your love, so that all creation can taste your abundance. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit abiding with us now and forever. Amen.

AGNUS DEI

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.
O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
have, mercy upon us.
O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
grant us thy peace.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

P: In the night in which he was betrayed, Our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples saying: Take and eat, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks and gave it for all to

drink saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

POST COMMUNION BLESSING

The Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and preserve you in Eternal Life.

POST COMMUNION SONG *Thankful Hearts and Voices Raise*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Presider:

Compassionate God, through the gifts of bread and wine our hearts are filled with the abundance of your love. Strengthen us that we, through this holy meal, may share your love freely, as you have shared with us. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit nourishing us now and forever.

Congregation: Amen.

THE BLESSING

SENDING SONG

How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds

ELW 620

GO IN PEACE, IN SERVICE

C: Thanks be to God!

PSALM 19:14

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*



- ♣ Fred Abrego
- ♣ Susan Caradec
- ♣ Jessica Coleman
- ♣ Paul Houghton
- ♣ Bryan Kile
- ♣ Ernest Luker
- ♣ David Magrill
- ♣ Jeremy Mitchell
- ♣ Geraine Moore
- ♣ Ed Peterman
- ♣ Dorothy Preuss
- ♣ Lupe Romero
- ♣ Scott Spates
- ♣ Patricia Steapp
- ♣ Ann Taylor
- ♣ Bill Tempel
- ♣ Becky Terry
- ♣ Dave Trickett
- ♣ Jaime Urbanski
- ♣ Bennie Valites
- ♣ Susan Wiles
- ♣ Michael Williams

COUNCIL MEETING

Council meeting will be Sunday, **September 20**, at 11:00 a.m. in the Annex.

Church Council

USHERS

Month: August

Team # 06

Leader: John Wenger

LAY READERS & ASSISTANTS

AUGUST

2 Reader — Shannon Martin
P/E — Nancy Beamesderfer

9 Reader — Linda Cuzzort
P/E — Steve Schulze

16 Reader — Alma Byerly
P/E — John Stokes

23 Reader — Ruby Schaper
P/E — Russell Richter

30 Reader — Alice Braun
P/E — Wendy Lambeth

P/E stands for Prayers and Eucharist

Nancy Beamesderfer

ATTENTION HOLY CROSS MEMBERS

Following the Church Safety Protocol, if you would like to make a reservation to use the church facilities for church or private events, please contact Sussy.

You must to fill out a Calendar Request Form or send an email.

Thank you.

YOUTH PROJECT

Come together in faith and friendship to our new Youth Project meetings.

We will meet every 2nd and 4th Wednesday, starting **September 9th**, 2026,

from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Youth Room.

Pr. Jim Berggren

MAM

Easy, Fun Volunteer Opportunities at MAM

- Sunday, August 23, 1—4 pm Restock Workday (volunteers)
 - Saturday, August 29, 10 am—2 pm Campus Completion Celebration
-

It's going to be a bushel of fun!

FELLOWSHIP CLUB

will meet

Saturday, September 19, at 4 PM

Harris County Smokehouse

19811 Northwest Freeway - Houston, TX 77065

Safeguards Safety Training

Holy Cross Lutheran Church - 7901 Westview Drive, Houston, TX 77055

Call John Lambeth @ 713-854-8085 to register, or register online:

<https://events.humanitix.com/host/634c6d6ed7a0c9053d9f6f58>

Class		Price	Day	Date	Time
Adult CPR			Sunday	9-Aug	1:00 pm - 4:30 pm
	CPR Only	\$74	Sunday	13-Sep	1:00 pm - 4:30 pm
	CPR + First Aid	\$92	Sunday	18-Oct	1:00 pm - 4:30 pm

Adult & Pediatric CPR			Saturday	1-Aug	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
	CPR Only	\$98	Saturday	5-Sep	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
	CPR + First Aid	\$108	Saturday	10-Oct	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
Basic Life Support		\$94	Saturday	11-Jul	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Friday	17-Jul	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Friday	31-Jul	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Saturday	8-Aug	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Saturday	15-Aug	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Friday	21-Aug	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Friday	4-Sep	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Saturday	12-Sep	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Saturday	19-Sep	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Friday	25-Sep	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Friday	9-Oct	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Saturday	17-Oct	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Saturday	24-Oct	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Friday	30-Oct	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
CPR Instructor course		\$299	Friday	24-Jul	9:00 am - 5:30 pm
			Friday	28-Aug	9:00 am - 5:30 pm
			Friday	2-Oct	9:00 am - 5:30 pm
RCP para adulto, niño y bebé			Saturday	18-Jul	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
	RCP solo	\$49	Saturday	22-Aug	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
	RCP + primeros auxilios	\$59	Saturday	26-Sep	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Saturday	31-Oct	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Saturday	5-Dec	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm

*Classes listed for September and later are subject to date changes
based on enrollment or church use of training area

Holy Cross Congregation Members receive a 15% discount. Use coupon code: HCLC2026

SUNDAY'S SCHEDULE

9:30 a.m. Traditional Worship service with Rev. Jim Berggren —WC

Sunday School / Nursery is available for small children during the service — Crib Room

10:30 a.m. Coffee fellowship following the service —Gym

10:45 a.m. Visitation Information Session —Annex

THIS WEEK AT HOLY CROSS

24 Mon	25 Tues	26 Wed	27 Thurs	28 Fri	29 Sat
		<i>12 pm Bible Study —VR</i>	<i>8 pm AA Women mtg. —Annex</i>	<i>9 am —5:30 pm SST CPR Instructor Course —MR/YR</i>	<i>6 pm Saturday Informal service —AT</i>

AT =Atrium, CL=Choir Loft, CR=Choir Room, ELC=Early Learning Center,
 FLC= Family Life Center = **GYM**, FLCA=Annex, KiM= Kids in Motion, MR=Media
 Room, VR=Volunteer Room, WC=Worship Center, YR=Youth Room,

SST=Safeguards Safety Training (CPR classes)